

EDUC 002

Brussels, 28 May 2002

OPINION

of the

Committee of the Regions

of 15 May 2002

on the

Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council

establishing the European Year of Education through Sport 2004

(COM(2001) 584 final) – 2001/0244 (COD)

The Committee of the Regions

HAVING REGARD TO the Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Year of Education through Sport 2004, COM(2001) 584 final – 2001/0244 (COD);

HAVING REGARD TO the Decision of the Council of the European Union of 23 November 2001 to consult it under the first paragraph of Article 265 of the Treaty establishing the European Community;

HAVING REGARD TO the Decision taken by its Bureau on 6 February 2002 to instruct Commission – Culture and Education – to draw up an Opinion on this subject;

HAVING REGARD TO the Treaty of Amsterdam, Articles 13 and 149;

HAVING REGARD TO the Treaty of Amsterdam Declaration on *Sport*;

HAVING REGARD TO the *European Model of Sport*, Commission consultation document - November 1998;

HAVING REGARD TO the Helsinki report on *Sport*, December 1999;

HAVING REGARD TO the Nice European Council Declaration on *the specific characteristics of sport and its social function in Europe* (Annexe IV), December 2000;

HAVING REGARD TO the Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the *European Model of Sport*, CdR 37/99 fin¹;

HAVING REGARD TO the Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on *Equal opportunities for girls and boys in leisure activities and especially in EU youth and sport programmes*, CdR 182/97 fin²;

HAVING REGARD TO the Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on *Interaction between education of young people and sport: A proposal for Union-level actions to promote the positive effects of sport in Europe*, CdR 222/96 fin³;

HAVING REGARD TO the Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (CdR 19/2001 fin)⁴;

HAVING REGARD TO the Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on *a Community Support Plan to Combat Doping in Sport* (COM(1999) 643 final) CdR 22/2000 fin⁵;

HAVING REGARD TO the Draft Opinion (CdR 388/2001 rev. 2) adopted by Commission – Culture and Education – on 22 March 2002 (Rapporteurs: **Mr Udo Mientus, Chairman of the Lower Saxony State Assembly's Committee for Federal and European Affairs (D/PES)** and **Mrs Susie Kemp, Opposition Leader of West Berkshire County Council (UK/EPP)**).

adopted the following opinion at its plenary session of 15-16 May 2002 (meeting of 15 May 2002)

1. The Committee of the Regions' general comments on the communication

1. The Committee of the Regions supports the European Commission initiative to designate 2004 the European Year of Education through Sport (referred to as the "Year") as long as due regard is given to the principle of subsidiarity. 2004 will provide a unique opportunity to focus on the educational and social dimension of sport at a time when major media focus will be on sport in Europe due to the Olympic games and the EURO 2004 Football tournament.
2. The Committee of the Regions believes that the involvement of local and regional authorities in the "European Year" is crucial to its success. In the spirit of subsidiarity, the role of local and regional authorities should be respected during the Year in recognition of their proximity to the citizens.
3. The CoR believes that in harnessing the potential of local and regional authorities the European Commission will maximise the impact of the Year, mobilise effectively all the relevant actors (in this case educational and sporting establishments) and the engagement of people of all ages in the Year, especially the young.
4. Local and regional authorities are in a unique position to ensure that the widest-possible access to Community actions is achieved, with a particular focus on disadvantaged groups. The European Year of Education through Sport builds upon the 2003 Year of Disabilities and allows for education and sports policies for the disabled to be encouraged across the European Union during the Olympic year. The specific points of the Draft Opinion fall under two themes, the Aims of the Year set out by the Commission and any subsequent delivery of the projects and actions in which Local and Regional authorities should be closely involved.

2. The aims of the Year

1. The Committee of the Regions believes that 2004 is an excellent opportunity to celebrate the unique value of sport to European society. This special Year should complement the focus on top-level sport, its competition and commercialisation by taking a broader view that focuses on all sports that bring European citizens together.
2. The Committee of the Regions is particularly keen to see an emphasis given to the role of individuals and volunteers that give their free time to others. This is of particular concern in areas of high social deprivation where voluntary support for clubs can be lacking in comparison with more affluent communities. In recognition of sports contribution to education and life-long learning, as well as the qualities of leadership, citizenship and teamwork, the CoR would like to see the Year focus on the most innovative approaches of engaging people in these communities underlining the Year's core principle of social inclusion. Sport encourages integration between people and also contributes to a sense of fair play and improves the health and well-being of communities that local and regional authorities serve.
3. The CoR clearly recognises sport's contribution to basic education skills but urges the European Commission to extend its aims to encompass all age groups as Life-Long Learning becomes more widely accepted. The role of Sport contributes significantly to understanding, integration and well being of people of all ages.
4. The CoR agrees with the European Commission that the Year of education through sport in 2004 provides a unique opportunity to flesh out and raise the profile of the opportunities for greater sport/school cooperation. The CoR would wish to see the European Commission draw up priorities within the existing Education and Youth Community programmes to complement the limited resources available within the budget for the Year. The CoR is convinced that for the Year to be successful and go beyond a series of merely symbolic actions, other programme resources, including SOCRATES, LEONARDO DA VINCI, YOUTH FOR EUROPE, need to be mobilised. In a clear recognition for young people, these programmes should specifically target support for the mobility of young people and of school physical education teachers to encourage trans-national competitions and promote best practices about the role and delivery of sport in schools. The promotion of local club/school partnerships should also be reinforced during the Year within communities where these contribute to the encouragement of young people's participation in sport outside school hours. Sport should also be recognised as having an important role as a means of communication.
5. The CoR believes that in order to reach young people effectively, all sports should be recognised during the Year and not merely those mainstream sports with a high media and television interest. Local and regional authorities are keen to encourage all sports that play a significant role in education, the development of young people's skills and social inclusion (i.e. minority sports).
6. In the spirit of the Nice declaration on sport, the CoR would like to see the role of sport taken into account across various Community policies. Notwithstanding the legal base for the Year, the CoR sees particular emphasis being given by the European Commission to the role of the Structural Funds, the European Employment and Social Inclusion Strategies and other Community programmes such as Twinning.
7. The CoR believes that during the Year local and regional authorities should be closely involved in any European Commission funded studies that seek to identify best practice

with the social integration of the disadvantaged groups through sport in education. The Year provides a unique opportunity to showcase successful actions that have contributed to the integration of disadvantaged groups building on work that has already been undertaken in the Member States.

8. The CoR is keen to see that the Year makes a clear economic case for the value of investing in sport in the long term. The CoR is convinced that the European Union can make a clear economic case for investing in sports facilities at local and regional level that in the longer term will contribute to a reduction in spending from governments on social services and health care relating to an ageing sedentary society.
9. The CoR believes that local and regional authorities have a considerable interest in the protection of young people in their schools and centres of excellence across the European Union from the pressures of competition, commercialisation and drug abuse. Local and regional authorities across the EU already play a key role in drug awareness and need to ensure that particular young people do not fall foul to the pressure of doping in their sports.

3. Implementation

1. The CoR welcomes the Commission proposal and expects the CoR and local and regional authorities will be closely consulted on both management arrangements and the delivery of the Year at national, regional and local level. To this end the CoR would like to be represented in the Community wide task force that is proposed.
2. The CoR agrees with the European Commission that partnerships are the key to the success of the Year. Member States should be encouraged by the European Union to ensure that the most appropriate delivery structures are established that maximise the involvement of local and regional authorities so that sports' associations and forums, clubs, and the voluntary sector are engaged. The CoR believes that the Year must give the opportunity for a broad exchange of experiences in the field of sport and education. The CoR would like to see examples of best practice at local and regional level being gathered, documented and published by the European Commission during the Year.
3. The CoR believes that the European Commission should give greater emphasis to the importance of mobilising all regional and local players for the purpose of executing the Year. Many local and regional authorities participate in or host sports' forums that will be able to make a specific contribution in ensuring the success of the Year across their regions.
4. The CoR would urge the European Commission to include a reference to local and regional authorities, via their national associations or otherwise, in the national forum that is to be established.
5. The CoR would urge the European Commission and the Member States to ensure that all actions financed during the Year are inclusive and reach all social groups with particular emphasis on the young, the disadvantaged and the disabled.

Brussels, 15 May 2002.

The President

The Secretary-General

of the
Committee of the Regions

of the
Committee of the Regions

Albert Bore

Vincenzo Falcone

¹ OJ C 374, 23.12.1999, p. 56

² OJ C 64, 27.2.1998, p. 81

³ OJ C 337, 11.11.1996, p. 60

⁴ OJ C 357, 14.12.2001, p. 36

⁵ OJ C 317, 6.11.2000, p. 63

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